

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

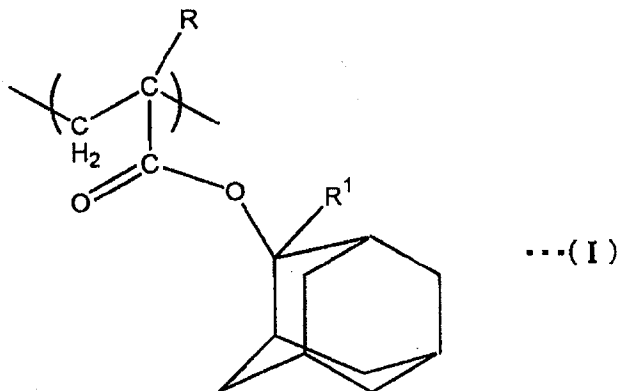
1-8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently amended) A resist composition comprising a resin component (A) that undergoes a change in alkali solubility in the presence of acid, and an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, wherein:

said resin component (A) has a weight average molecular weight of no more than 7,500 and comprises structural units (a) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester,

wherein said structural units (a) comprise a structural unit (a1) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester containing an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group which is represented by the following general formula (I),

[Formula 2]



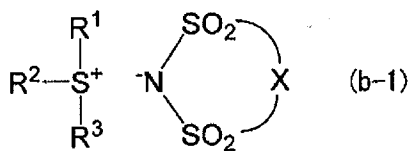
[wherein, R represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl group, and R<sup>1</sup> represents a lower alkyl group of 2 to 5 carbon atoms],

a structural unit (a2) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a lactone-containing polycyclic group, and

a structural unit (a3) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a hydroxyl group-containing aliphatic hydrocarbon group; and wherein

said component (B) comprises a sulfonium compound represented by a general formula (b-1) shown below:

[Formula 1]



[wherein, X represents a perfluoroalkylene group of 3 carbon atoms; R<sup>1</sup> to R<sup>3</sup> each represents, independently, an aryl group or an alkyl group, and at least one of R<sup>1</sup> to R<sup>3</sup> represents an aryl group].

10. **(Previously presented)** A resist composition according to claim 9, wherein said component (B) further comprises an onium salt-based acid generator comprising a straight-chain fluorinated alkylsulfonate anion of 1 to 7 carbon atoms.

11. **(Previously presented)** A resist composition according to claim 9, further comprising a nitrogen-containing organic compound.

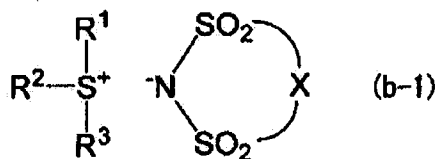
12. **(Previously presented)** A method for forming a resist pattern, comprising the steps of forming a resist film on a substrate using a resist composition according to claim 9; conducting selective exposure treatment of said resist film; and alkali developing said resist film to form said resist pattern.

13. **(Currently amended)** A resist composition, comprising a resin component (A) that undergoes a change in alkali solubility in the presence of acid, and an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, wherein

said resin component (A) has a weight average molecular weight of no more than 8,000 and comprises structural units (a) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester;

said component (B) comprises ~~at least one~~ a sulfonium compound represented by a general formula (b-1) or shown below:

[Formula 1]



[wherein, X represents an alkylene group of 2 to 6 carbon atoms in which at least one hydrogen atom has been substituted with a fluorine atom; R<sup>1</sup> to R<sup>3</sup> each represents, independently, an aryl group of 6 to 20 carbon atoms or an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms, and at least one of R<sup>1</sup> to R<sup>3</sup> represents an aryl group]; and

an onium salt-based acid generator comprising a straight-chain fluorinated alkylsulfonate anion of 1 to 7 carbon atoms, wherein the blend ratio (weight ratio) between the onium salt-based acid generator and the sulfonium compounds is within the range of 1:9 to 9:1.

14. **(Previously presented)** A resist composition according to claim 13, wherein said structural units (a) comprise structural units (a1) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group.

15. **(Previously presented)** A resist composition according to claim 14, wherein said structural units (a) further comprise structural units (a2) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a lactone-containing monocyclic or polycyclic group.

16. **(Previously presented)** A resist composition according to claim 14, wherein said structural units (a) further comprise structural units (a3) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a polar group-containing aliphatic hydrocarbon group.

17. **(Previously presented)** A resist composition according to claim 13, further comprising a nitrogen-containing organic compound.

18. **(Previously presented)** A method for forming a resist pattern, comprising the steps of forming a resist film on a substrate using a resist composition according to claim 13;

conducting selective exposure treatment of said resist film; and alkali developing said resist film to form said resist pattern.

19. (Canceled)

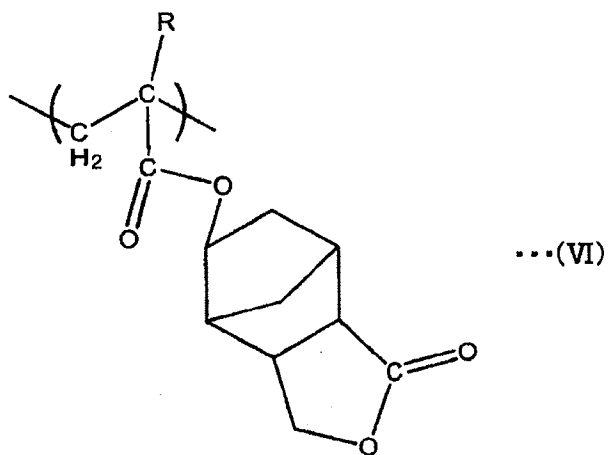
20. (Canceled)

21. (New) A resist composition according to claim 13, wherein  $R^1$  to  $R^3$  each represents, independently, an aryl group of 6 to 10 carbon atoms or an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms

22. (New) A resist composition according to claim 13, wherein all of  $R^1$  to  $R^3$  are aryl groups.

23. (New) A resist composition according to claim 13, wherein the onium salt-based acid generator comprising a straight-chain fluorinated alkylsulfonate anion of 3 carbon atoms has a mono- or diphenyliodonium cation, or a mono-, di-, or triphenylsulfonium cation, all of which may be substituted with lower alkyl groups of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, or a lower alkoxy group of 1 to 2 carbon atoms, as well as a dimethyl(4-hydroxynaphthyl)sulfonium cation.

24. (New) A resist composition according to claim 9, wherein the structural units (a2) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a lactone-containing polycyclic group is a unit which is represented by the following general formula (VI),



[wherein, R represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl group].